In the Simplest Terms, In the Most Convenient Definitions

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by Queenoftheskittleholics

Summary

Five very different teens. One Saturday detention that they won't forget.

The winter chill had begun to diminish, but the sky was still gray on this particular Saturday morning in March. The quiet was broken by three cars pulling into the parking lot of the high school.

In one car sat a pair of twins, although given their wildly differing styles, only their facial features hinted at the relation. They both also looked decidedly like they would rather be anywhere else. After a moment, the twins grabbed their bags and resignedly opened the doors to leave.

"Hey, kids, wait." Their dad said, and they stopped to look at him as he awkwardly tried to think of something to say next. "Uh, have a nice day." He continued, but Lake Olsen rolled their eyes at that.

"In an all day weekend detention?" They grumbled, "Not likely." And before he could reply they slammed the door shut and headed towards the entrance.

"Well… bye, Dad." Tulip Olsen said awkwardly before hurrying after her sibling.

In another car, a boy in a letterman's jacket shifted uncomfortably in his seat.

"I… I'm sorry, Mom." he mumbled, looking down at his shoes. His mother sighed before turning to look at him.

"I know, Jesse, but you have to own up to what you did. And you know how Nate looks up to you. You have to set a good example for him." After a moment, she gave him a gentle smile, and ruffled his hair. "I'll see you later, hon. We can talk about this then." Jesse Cosay nodded before returning the smile and exiting the car.

In the third car, an older girl sat in the driver's seat of her car as she listened to her phone with an annoyed expression.

"Yes, Dad. I'm at school. I don't know why I have to- I know, I know, I just- I'm sorry." After a second, Grace Monroe looked at the screen, realizing she had been hung up on. With a frustrated sigh, she put her phone into her bag and flipped down the sun visor to examine herself in the mirror inside. Satisfied with her appearance, she got out of the car.

A fifth figure arrived, although not by car. Simon Laurent pulled his white hoodie up to guard against the cool March air, with an expression as moody as the weather as he made his way through the parking lot and up the school steps.

The five teens all walked into the library where they had been instructed to gather, and warily took their seats. Grace and Jesse sat next to each other at a table in the front, and after looking at each other for a second, exchanged friendly nods. Tulip sat in the second row, and looked at Lake, gesturing for them to take the empty seat beside her. Instead, Lake flashed her a look of annoyance and dropped into the seat behind her, ignoring the look of hurt that briefly flashed across Tulip's face before she faced forward again. Finally, Simon slouched into the seat at the table next to Lake, and the two glared at each other. Before anyone could say anything, however, Vice Principal Hughes walked into the library with her usual sour expression.

"Good, it seems you're all here. Hello, children. Hopefully you take this time to reflect on our school's values of kindness and community. We want to help you become the best people you can be." She said in a tone that conveyed exactly none of those sentiments. Then she scowled. "Because of your transgressions, you have to spend the day here until 4 PM, and *I* have to watch you. I'll be in my office across the hall, and that door is to remain open to ensure nobody tries anything. I am also to inform you that during this time, you are to each write an essay, at least 1000 words long. It will be about who you are. There should be spare pencils by the front desk." She declared, placing a sheet of paper in front of each of them.

Ignoring the five shocked and dismayed faces that greeted this pronouncement, she looked them over and said, “And I would prefer not to have to see you all here again next week.” and then walked out of the library before they had the chance to say anything.
“What’s her problem?” Tulip muttered, more to herself than anyone else.
“I’m sure she’s just as excited to spend the day here as we are, duh.” Lake replied, earning them an unamused look from Tulip.
“Trust me, she’s always like that.” Simon scoffed.
After that, the five teens began looking around at each other, unsure what to do next.
“So should we all introduce ourselves? Like they do in an AA meeting?” Grace asked after a second, casually stretching her arms above her head. Then she got up out of her seat. “Hello, my name’s Grace Monroe.”
“I think we all know who you are, homecoming queen.” Simon replied, and Grace looked at him with an amused curiosity at this statement. A look of embarrassment flashed across Simon’s face as he slouched into his chair in an attempt to seem nonchalant.
“My name’s Jesse, Jesse Cosay!” Jesse said cheerfully, never one to turn down an invite to socialize.
“Oh, yeah. I see you around a lot.” Grace said, and Jesse beamed at the recognition from a popular upperclassman. Then Grace turned to Tulip, who after a second, realized it was her turn to introduce herself.
“Oh, my name’s Tulip Olsen.” she said, and noticed the curious looks the others gave her.
“It’s a whole story with my parents, but also a perfectly normal name.” She continued defensively.
“And you, you got a name?” Grace asked as she turned to Lake, though her light tone contrasted the scrutinizing look she gave them.
“Lake.” Lake replied after a second, in a tone that suggested any further questioning about it was ill-advised.
“What are you, like, the evil twin?” Simon asked sardonically, looking at Lake, which earned him another scowl.
“Why don’t you find out?” They snapped, and Simon looked taken aback, but was interrupted before he could reply.
“Hey, hey, no need to start a fight, tough girl.” Grace quipped, holding her hands up in mock surrender. Lake’s response was to turn the scowl at her.
“Don’t call me that.” They said angrily, and after a moment of surprise Grace shrugged.
“You’re up, Hoodie.” she said, grinning playfully at him. He looked away in an attempt to seem casual, but his flustered expression at her gaze was hard to miss.
“It’s Simon Laurent.” He said gruffly, and after a moment it became apparent he did not want to say anything more.
“So, what sport do you play?” Tulip asked, gesturing to Jesse’s letterman jacket in an attempt to be sociable.
“Oh, not… play, exactly. I’m on the swim team.” Jesse said, gesturing to the patch on his upper sleeve which sure enough, depicted a person swimming. “I swim the butterfly! I qualified for state, but we already had a lot of people who wanted to go so…. Next year.” The others looked at him, and he blushed as he continued hastily, “And I mean, butterfly isn’t my favorite anyway, so it’s cool.”
“Not your favorite?” Grace asked, “What’s up? Your parents make you do it? Trying to live through you or something?”
“No?” Jesse replied, looking mildly concerned at her questions. “I just prefer freestyle, but we needed people for butterfly. So the team thought I should do it ‘cause I was one of the

people who could do it well enough."
"What about what *you* thought?" Lake asked, one eyebrow raised. Jesse shifted uncomfortably, but didn't answer.
"Oh, I took part in the Scientific Odyssey Trials! My team won the award for 'most hypothetically proven hypothesis'!" Tulip said proudly in an attempt to move the conversation along. Lake looked bored by her statement, while the others looked at her with some confusion. "You know, schools in the area send teams to come up with experiments to compete. I mean, we don't win, like, 1st place or 2nd place or whatever, there are categories." She explained awkwardly. Then she looked annoyed. "Like 'Best Last Ditch Effort', which *yes* is real, *yes* I petitioned to have it removed, and *no* they did not."
"Tulip, please. Not this rant again. Don't make having detention with you worse." Lake groaned, and Tulip's face scrunched in annoyance as she glared at her twin before speaking again.
"Well, anyway, do we have to write this essay?" she groaned, looking disdainfully at the blank sheet of paper in front of her. "I mean, 1000 words? How are we supposed to keep track? This is the 21st century. We invented the word count feature for a reason!" Grace snorted, and Tulip looked at her with irritated confusion. "What?" She asked.
"No offense, it's just kinda funny the nerd doesn't wanna do homework. Don't you brainy types usually live for that stuff?" She asked.
"It's not like this counts towards a grade." Tulip retorted, "Also I'm a STEM nerd, alright? Creative arts are *not* my thing. I work much better with facts and logic than feelings and stuff.`` She continued, although a brief look of embarrassment at this admission crossed her face before she spoke again. "Lastly, just because I'm smart doesn't mean I like school."
"Fair enough." Grace replied, looking down unhappily at her own blank sheet of paper. "This does seem *so* boring."
"But we still have to do it, don't we?" Jesse offered sheepishly, though he didn't seem too enthusiastic about the idea himself. "I don't want to have to come back here. I have a swim meet next weekend. I can't miss it."
"I hope this doesn't make Mom and Dad change their mind about letting me go to game design camp." Tulip muttered anxiously.
"Yeah, I could definitely go without another Saturday detention." Grace said, and the others nodded their agreement.
After that, the rest of the morning passed fairly quietly. Nobody was sure how to break the silence that had settled over the group, and they didn't want to start their assigned essays either. They began finding various things to keep themselves occupied. Soon, Lake was slumped over, asleep in their chair, Jesse flicked through his phone, Grace was concentrating on painting her nails, and Simon and Tulip were deep in thought writing things that were decidedly not their essays. At one point, Jesse began playing a video on his phone, looking decidedly unhappy about it. The sound wasn't very loud, but enough to earn an annoyed glance from Lake who was sitting nearby. He quickly turned it off in embarrassment, but gave them a defensive frown as he did so.
Around 10:00, Vice Principal Hughes let them all go to use the restrooms, and the group was glad for the chance to get up and move their legs.
"Don't forget to get to work on your essays." She said sternly, casting a glance over the blank papers on the tables. But no one was eager to start, and they soon all found themselves back in their own separate corners, finding their own ways to pass the time.
Around noon, Vice Principal Hughes entered again. "Alright, time for lunch, if you've got one. You can grab some water bottles from the cafeteria." She looked among the group.

“You.” she said, pointing at Jesse, who jumped up out of his seat, “And… you.” She said, pointing at Lake, who scoffed and got to their feet.
As the pair followed Vice Principal Hughes out of the library, the remaining three students looked at each other, unsure of what they should do in the meantime.
“I guess we wait for them to come back?” Tulip said.
“Yeah, it’ll be what? Five minutes?” Grace replied, though she didn’t sound pleased..
With that, an uncomfortable silence descended over the room as they waited for the other two to return with the waters.
Having grabbed the five water bottles, Jesse and Lake began making their way back to the library. However, the silence that had descended over the pair during their little excursion was becoming too much for Jesse.
“So… I don’t think I’ve seen you around a lot. Which is kinda weird because I’m friends with basically every group at school.” He said with an awkward laugh, and Lake raised an eyebrow.
“Hey, what was the video you were watching?” They asked, ignoring his comment.
“Nothing!” Jesse answered quickly, and then kept talking when he saw their suspicious expression, “Anyway yeah, I know a lot of people here. The jocks, theatre kids, eraser kids…”
“Eraser kids?” Lake asked skeptically, unable to help themself upon hearing that.
“Y’know, kids who hang out in the parking lot after school and compare eraser shaving?” Jesse asked, and Lake looked further confused. “I mean, it’s a small group, to be fair, but I’m friends with them.”
“Ooh, fitting in, what a gift.” Lake replied, tone dripping with sarcasm.
“I didn’t say it was a gift, it just means I’m likeable!” Jesse protested, though instead of responding, Lake just began walking faster. “...Except to you, apparently.” he said to himself, rushing to catch up to them.
Soon, they made it back to the library where the water bottles were distributed and everyone prepared for lunch. As the teens opened their lunches a pungent smell wafted through the air. They turned to the source, which was coming from where Tulip sat. In her hand she held a peeled onion which she was preparing to bite into until she saw Grace, Simon and Jesse staring at her.
“What?” She asked defensively, “They’re good!”
“Ugh, you and your stupid onions.” Lake muttered. Tulip glared at her twin, who glared back before rolling their eyes.
With that, they all turned their attention to their lunches.
Alongside the onion, Tulip had a bag of chips and a few cheese sticks in her bag. Lake pulled out a bag of Taco Bell takeout. Jesse began to eat a sandwich he brought from home, and an apple to go with it. Simon had only the water bottle they had brought from the cafeteria with him, but his expression made it clear he wouldn’t appreciate it being pointed out.
“Ugh.” Grace said, pulling out a container of salad from her backpack. “This is what they had made for lunch? *Now* they're worried about my health. I almost miss when they would just give me Mountain Dew laced with Pixie Stix before a rehearsal.” Then she reached into the backpack again, pulling out some bags of chips. “Luckily I came prepared.” She declared cheerfully, then looked at Simon before tossing a bag at him. “Here, you’re making me sad.”
“Wait-“ He said in surprise, but she had already turned back to her food, so he took the bag with a shrug.
After that, they all went back to concentrating on their meals in silence.
Soon, the kids had all finished their lunches, and were wordlessly contemplating whether

they should get to work.
“I just had an idea. Let’s get some music going and make this not totally boring!” Grace suddenly exclaimed, jumping to her feet.
“What?” Lake asked, looking skeptical at the suggestion.
“I think it sounds fun!” Jesse replied brightly.
“Should we be doing this?” Tulip asked nervously, “Won’t we get in trouble with Vice Principal Hughes?”
“Eh, she doesn’t really care what we do as long as we avoid serious injury or property damage.” Simon said dismissively.
“Well then, it’s settled.” Grace declared, pulling out her phone and opening up the app. "Let’s clean this up and get started.” She said, throwing out her trash.
After she did so, she walked out into the empty section of the library area, then turned to the group.
“You guys aren’t gonna make me dance by myself, are you?” She grinned. “I know I’m good, but what fun would that be?”
“I’m in!” Jesse declared, laughing as he quickly threw away his trash and made his way to where she stood. “What about you guys?”
“Sure, why not.’ Tulip said with a roll of her eyes, unable to hide her smile as she cleared her own trash and joined the pair.
Lake also got up to throw out their trash, but didn’t move to join the three where they were standing. Simon also remained in his seat, watching the proceedings.
“Lake, c’mon.” Tulip said with a pleading glance at her twin.
“It’ll be fun!” Jesse said with an excited grin.
“Doubt it, but alright.” Lake replied, smiling slightly as they made their way to them.
They all looked expectantly at Simon, who let out an annoyed huff as he rolled his eyes.
“Don’t be lame, come join us already!” Grace playfully chided him.
“Fine.” Simon grumbled as he stood up to toss out his trash and joined them where they all stood.
Grace and Jesse grinned widely, and while the other three didn’t look as enthused, they smiled nonetheless as Grace started the music.
Soon, they were all enjoying the music, any previous reluctance left behind. After sitting around in relative quiet for the duration of the morning, they had all needed the chance to have fun like this. Jesse and Lake were sharing an air mic as they sang along, Tulip gestured as if to an imaginary audience, and Simon was discreetly trying to watch Grace as she joyfully danced around.
“Quiet down in there!” They heard Vice Prince Hughes yell from across the hall, and the group looked anxiously across the hallway, turning off the music. But there was no sign of her leaving her office to actually do anything about the noise. When they realized this, there was a collective sigh of relief, and then they began to laugh as the tension subsided.
“I thought we were really in trouble!” Jesse said when he managed to calm down.
“Me too!” Tulip said. “But honestly, I don’t think she’s really that scary. She barely paid attention to us all day.”
“Right? I feel a little insulted, honestly.” Grace snickered, then grinned. “Well, shall we get back to the fun?”
“Yeah, it’s fun! I really like singing!” Jesse said. “I actually thought about joining the school choir, but I just like swimming better.” Then he looked sheepish. “Also Mr. Akagi and Mr. Park have that whole frenemy rival thing going on.” The others nodded at that. The band and choir teachers had a rivalry known throughout the school, and it was a half joking point of

debate if they were best friends or mortal enemies.
“Fun! I like to dance.” Grace said. “Ballet, tap, hip-hop…” She continued, accompanying each style she listed with a quick dance move.
“Cool! Do you take classes?” Jesse asked, looking impressed.
“No.” Grace replied quickly, an unhappy expression flickering across her face before she dismissively waved her hand. “I was too good. Now I just do private lessons.” But she didn’t sound as pleased about it as her words indicated. Before anyone else could say anything, she started the music again, and the conversation was over.
After a few more songs, the fun had worn off, and the music was turned off.
“Hey, do you guys think we’ll be friends? On Monday?” Jesse asked hesitantly. “Because I do think of you guys as, like, my friends now.”
“Sure, why not?” Lake replied, although their barely suppressed smile belied the casual tone.
“That might be nice.” Tulip said as she considered the idea. She, Lake, and Jesse looked pleased at the prospect, but Grace and Simon were less so.
“Very sweet, but do you want my honest thoughts?” Grace asked.
“I… yes?” Jesse asked, looking at her with a worried expression.
“Honestly, I don’t think so. Not this group.” Grace said with a shrug of her shoulders.
“I mean… I’m friends with a lot of people!” Jesse protested uncomfortably.
“Right, I’m sure you’re just such a charming guy.” Grace said, in a tone too breezy to sound sincere. “They just like you so much, and they’ll just like all your other friends too!” The others turned to look at her, and her expression grew cold as she continued. “Or, can I suggest another scenario? Let’s say after this, back in school, you’re hanging with your jock buddies. Then Tulip walks over to say hi, eating one of her onions or something. After she leaves, maybe one of your friends makes some joke about the nerd. You gonna stand up for her? Or are you gonna laugh along so they don’t think you’re weird? Well?” She asked, staring down at him. Jesse looked down in shame, unable to protest, and Tulip’s face was a mix of shock and anger as she looked between the two.
“Right, cause that’s what you’d do?” Lake asked disdainfully, having placed a protective hand on their twin’s shoulder. There was a moment of uncomfortable silence, and Grace didn’t meet any of their eyes as she responded.
“Yes.”
“So that’s the secret of popularity?” Simon scoffed, “Just telling people what they want to hear?”
“Well, Ponytail, sorry we can’t all be enlightened enough not to care about others’ feelings.” Grace said in that same faux breezy tone. Lake scoffed, and Simon looked like he wanted to dispute that, but it was Tulip who spoke up.
“That’s not caring, that's… that’s just being fake so people like you!” She protested, and for once Grace looked genuinely taken aback at her words.
“Well, you certainly liked me telling the truth.” She said after a second.
“It’s not true, it’s stupid.” Lake snapped. “If your friends care so much about who else you hang out with, they’re bad friends. You know that, right?” Grace said nothing, but Jesse looked ashamed.
“Maybe.” He said, then sighed. “I just… I don’t know. I’m in here because I wanted to impress them. My friends. They… *we* got into Scott Bensons’s locker and put some old cheese in it to make it smell.`` He looked around at their grossed out expressions and took a moment before continuing “I didn’t *really* do it, but I filmed it when he opened it. I let it happen. So that’s why I’m here.” He explained, and the regret on his face was clear.
“Wait, was that the video you were watching?” Lake asked, and Jesse didn't answer, but his

face made it clear.
“I heard about that. That was *you?*” Tulip asked, looking at Jesse with dismay.
“I mean, *I* didn’t put it in there…” Jesse protested, though even he sounded unconvinced.
“His notes and books got kinda messed up.” Tulip continued, now sounding somewhat upset.
“I mean, why would you and your friends even *do* that?” It was a moment before Jesse responded to her question.
“I don’t know.” he admitted. “I mean I don’t know about them, I just thought it was supposed to be *funny*, ya know? But it wasn't. He was really upset about it.”
“He was on my team for the Scientific Odyssey Trials. He’s a nice guy.” Tulip said quietly, and Jesse looked even more miserable than before.
“Yeah, it was a pretty jerk move.” Lake stated.
“And filming it was a *dumb* move.” Grace quipped, and upon seeing the reproachful looks the three underclassmen gave her, scoffed and leaned back in her chair.
“Yeah. I think I’m gonna apologize to Scott on Monday. It’s the least I can do.” Jesse decided, then looked at Tulip. “I mean, you’re right, it did mess up his stuff. I remember hoping he wouldn’t get us in trouble but… Thinking about him having to go home and tell his parents about what happened, I just feel bad.”
“Well that’s good, at least.” Tulip replied, with an encouraging smile.
“Yeah, real cute.” Simon scoffed, and now the annoyed glares were directed at him. After a moment of silence, it was Grace who spoke up.
“Well, my turn next I guess. I got stuck here because I skipped class to go shopping.” She said with a shrug. “My parents only cared enough to make sure I went to detention. To learn my lesson about not *embarrassing the family* or *ruining my chances.*”
“Getting detention is ruining your chances?” Lake asked skeptically.
“Anything they don’t like is, pretty much. Of course, they think I should just be grateful they let me go here at all instead of just homeschooling me so I could *learn from the best.*” Grace said, looking down as she spoke, looking far more subdued than she had all day. Looking up, she realized the others were staring at her, slightly concerned. “Plus, it was *so boring* anyway. I didn’t even find anything cute.” She said in an attempt to change the subject. “What about you? Why are you guys here?” She asked, looking at Tulip, Lake, and Simon.
“For a stupid reason.” Lake said with an annoyed shrug.
“Didn’t you get in an argument with that security guard?” Tulip asked hesitantly. “You know, the one with the British accent and the trench coat?”
“Mace. And yeah, because he’s a creep. He keeps calling me ‘girl’, and I think he just has it out for me cuz of…” Lake gestured to their person. After a moment, a look of realization dawned on Tulip, who looked indignant.
“What? That jerk! Why didn’t you tell Mom and Dad?” She asked angrily, and Lake wrapped their arms around their knees.
“I just... I didn’t wanna talk about it. It sucks and I really didn’t wanna deal with it.” They said.
“Wait, what?” Jesse asked, looking lost as to what they meant.
“Apparently my look isn’t *appropriate* for a 'young lady' of this institution. Ugh, I hate that phrase. And I don’t-“ Lake looked around at the group. “Well… I don’t know what I feel like. But it’s not that.”
“I think you look cool!” Jesse said kindly, and Lake looked flustered at the compliment before turning away.
“Shouldn’t we tell Mom and Dad? Or the principal?” Tulip asked, still upset.
“I tried to explain, but the principal just wanted to make the problem go away, not so much

actually solving it." Lake replied bitterly, and the others nodded. The principal was known for his eccentricity, and not exactly his helpfulness.
"Well, what about Mom and Dad? Do you… think they wouldn't accept it?" Tulip prodded, although her tone was one of concern.
"I don't know!" Lake snapped, then glared at Tulip. "And since when do you care? All you do is hang out in your room all day ignoring everything you don't want to deal with."
Hearing this, Tulip looked like she had been slapped across the face by her twin's words.
"What's with you? I just wanted to help, sorry if that interferes with your crusade to be pissed off at everything all the time!" She snapped, and the other teens looked uncomfortable at the family argument unfolding in front of them.
"Well *I'm* sorry if my crusade to be pissed off is interfering with everything being perfect in Tulip-land! Besides, yeah, you're such a ray of sunshine. Didn't you get here because you argued with your English teacher?" Lake shot back.
"I… yeah. I don't know. I just… with Mom and Dad's divorce, things have been so stressful." Tulip said, much quieter than before, and Lake looked regretful at seeing their twin so sad.
"I mean, that's not like… your fault." They said, in an awkward attempt to comfort her.
"But what if it is?" Tulip burst out, and Lake stared at her. "I mean… I guess it sounds kind of stupid, but I don't know… Like… remember when we went to Dolphworld and they spent the trip arguing about me needing glasses?"
"What? Tulip, for someone so smart you are an idiot." Lake replied with an incredulous look. "Mom and Dad did *not* get divorced over arguing about you needing *glasses*. They got divorced because they argued because they weren't happy. " They said firmly.
"Since when do *you* care?" Tulip echoed bitterly, and Lake looked surprised at the response.
"We used to be good friends, but now I feel like you don't like me anymore." Tulip admitted, and Lake looked even guiltier.
"You're my sister, of course I like you! I just… I got tired of being Lake & Tulip, the twin set. And I mean, you're smart and know what you like and want to do, Miss 'Best Hypothetically Proven Hypothesis'," and Tulip let out a soft laugh at that. "I just… I want to figure myself out. Sorry if I made you feel like I didn't care."
"It's ok." Tulip said. "I'm sure whoever you turn out to be will be pretty cool." Lake smiled at the sentiment from their twin.
"I need to tell Nate I love him when I get home." Jesse said, looking emotional, and Tulip and Lake suddenly looked awkward at the reminder that there were witnesses to their sibling quarrel. Grace and Simon also looked awkward at witnessing the moment, until Grace turned to Simon.
"So what about you? What brings you here this fine Saturday morning?" She asked, and he raised an eyebrow.
"Why do you need to know?" He asked.
"We're all sharing. Might as well, right?" Grace said nonchalantly, and Simon shrugged.
"I got in a fight, but they deserved it!" He said defensively.
"About what?" Grace asked, and Simon looked embarrassed at this.
"My book." he said, and looked more embarrassed when they all looked questioningly at him. "I'm writing a book, and some guys found it." Simon started looking angry as he continued. "I just wanted it back, but they thought that was funny. Not so much when I punched one of them." He said with a vague air of satisfaction.
"What did your parents say?" Tulip asked.
"Uh, my aunt didn't say anything, since she's who knows where." Simon replied, and the

others looked at him in confusion. “I live with my aunt. She’s not exactly Mom of the Year. Currently, she’s off somewhere else doing something else, like usual, and still making my life as annoying as if she were here getting into yet another argument with me.” Seeing their shocked looks at this confession, Simon suddenly looked very embarrassed, and then shifted to annoyed. “So are we done playing *20 Questions* now?” He asked, before standing up. The others were unsure what to say, and for the first time that day, Grace looked regretful at her prodding.
Tulip must have felt the same, because as Simon moved to walk away from the group, she hurriedly asked “What's your book about?”
“What?” Simon stopped, looking surprised at the question. “Oh, it’s, uh, it’s a fantasy story. About a guy who discovers he’s the king and has to fight for his rightful throne.”
“Oh.” Tulip replied, though her face clearly conveyed that she was not impressed with this summary.
“What?” Simon demanded in a rather defensive tone. Tulip hesitated as she tried to think of what to say.
“I mean it’s… well, it’s been done, hasn’t it?” She said, her tone matter of fact despite it’s awkwardness. “Doesn’t it sound a bit-”
“Interesting! It sounds very interesting!” Grace interrupted, having noticed Simon’s offended expression. Then she turned to him with a wide smile. “You should totally let us read it sometime!”
“Oh, well if you want to, I guess. Uh, yeah.” He said, trying not to act flustered. Behind them, Lake tried to suppress their snickers at the scene, which earned a glare from Simon.
“Anyway,” They said, their tone casual, “Simon has a point, oddly enough. Anyone else have any other deep dark secrets they want to get off their chest right now in this fine Saturday detention? Or can we do something else?”
“One time, my friends gave me their celery at lunch because they didn’t like it and I did, only that lunch lady Mrs. Graham saw me and thought I was wasting celery. So she stood there and made me eat like 30 pieces of celery.” Jesse said, looking distressed at the memory.
There was a moment of silence as the others looked at him, unsure how to respond to what they had just heard.
“That… sounds more like a problem the lunch lady has.” Lake finally said, and Jesse shrugged.
“So, now that we *did* just share all that stuff… can we be friends? On Monday?” He questioned awkwardly, looking at the group. “Or do you really think our friends are too different?”
“What’s with all this clique crap? What is this, some John Hughes movie starring Molly Ringwald?” Lake snarked, ignoring the amused look that the comment earned from Tulip.
“Ooooh like *Pretty in Pink*? That’s a fun movie.” Jesse suggested, and Lake couldn’t help but let out a laugh.
“Sure, like *Pretty In Pink*.” They replied, and Jesse grinned happily at them.
“I would like that!” Tulip said, smiling at Jesse and her twin.
“Sure, why not.” Grace said, though she was unable to keep a sincere smile off her face.
“Hate to be the bearer of bad news, but it’s almost 3:00. We have an hour left. Has anybody started the essays?” Simon cut in, only to notice the amused and incredulous looks from the other students. “Oh, alright, fine.” he said, trying not to smile. “Eh, it's not like I really wanted to do mine anyway. I mean, detention homework? Is Hughes serious?”
“Well….” Grace began, then looked down as she trilled her lips, deep in thought. “...What if… we all wrote… one essay from all of us?” The others looked at her with some confusion,

and she continued, “I mean if we each add a part, I’m sure we can knock this out no problem.”
“That could be fun, I guess.” Jesse said, though he didn’t sound very convinced.
“Eh, if it’s less work for us.” Lake shrugged, and Tulip nodded.
“I… I could do the writing I guess.” Simon said, though he didn’t look very pleased at the prospect, and the others gathered around him.
Some time later, the group looked over the finished essay, their expressions unsure.
“Do you think this will be enough?” Tulip asked.
“I mean, she can’t *really* grade us on this, can she?” Grace answered, though Tulip looked unconvinced.
“Our time’s nearly up anyway.” Lake pointed out, “I just wanna get out of here.” And they all nodded at that statement.
“Well, I think it’s good enough.” Jesse said, trying to sound optimistic.
“It’s fine.” Simon snapped, standing up.
“So that’s it then, I guess?” Tulip asked, though she sounded unsure.
“I guess.” Grace shrugged.
“But we’ll see each other Monday, right? Like, talk to each other?” Jesse asked apprehensively, and the others looked at him, considering the question.
“Of course we will.” Lake said, and he smiled gratefully at them.
“Detention kids have to stick together, right?” Grace asked cheerfully, and the others smiled at the declaration.
After a few minutes, the clock finally hit 4:00, and the five teens made their way to the parking lot. When they exited, one of the cars opened its door, and a boy who looked too much like Jesse to be mistaken for anything other than his brother came running over.
“Jesse!” he cried, holding his arms out for a hug which Jesse happily granted.
“Hey, Nate!” he said as he released him from the hug. “I missed you!” Then Jesse gestured to the others. “Those are my friends.” Nate waved, and Tulip and Grace cheerfully waved back while Simon and Lake smiled.
“Bye guys!” Jesse said, walking off with Nate towards the car where their father was waiting.
“Yeah, bye.” Tulip said, and Lake waved as they headed off to the car where their own father was waiting.
“Simon, hold on.” Grace called, and he looked at her to see what she wanted.
“Yeah?” He asked.
But instead of answering his question, Grace held up her phone, leaned close next to him, and before he could say anything, took a photo of the two of them.
“I hope you don’t mind, but I can’t wait to see my parents’ faces when they see me post this on my Insta.” She said with a laugh, then grinned at him. “And I wanna hear more about that book of yours! See you around!” She called over her shoulder as she made her way to her car.
After a moment of surprise, Simon smiled to himself as he began to walk out of the parking lot to make his own way home.
Once they had left, Vice Principal Hughes entered the library to make sure everything was in order, and sighed with frustration as she noticed that there was only one essay, which looked rather short. Still, she picked it up and began to read what was written.
Vice Principal Hughes,
We think that it is crazy to expect us to be able to explain how we are to you in a thousand words. We don’t even understand who we are, and we are just trying to figure that out. There are a lot of labels people want to give each other, based on what they assume they know about you. But really, we’re all just people, and you can’t neatly fit us into categories.

We can make that mistake too, of thinking we know the situation, or what someone else is thinking. But sometimes we have to try to understand it from their perspective, and we realize we're all just trying to deal with our lives.
People who try to tell you who they think should be aren't worth your time. Instead they should support you as you try to figure that out for yourself.
That is what we discovered in today's detention. People are complicated and can hurt each other and be hurt. They can be hard to understand. But we can try.
This may not be the answer you were looking for, but we hope you can accept it. We're not sure we ***can*** *even give the answer you asked us for, so this will have to do.*
Signed,
Grace, Simon, Lake, Tulip, and Jesse

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